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Notes on Aristotle De Anima 3.5

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NOTES ON DE ANIMA 3.5.

Of all the Aristotelian doctrines perhaps the most difficult is that concerning the Active and Passive Intellects which we find in the short fifth chapter of the third book of the De Anima. Interpretations of this chapter have been almost as numerous as interpreters, and it would be naive to expect at this stage to be definitive. Nevertheless it seems that progress has been delayed in many cases by a too casual approach to what Aristotle says in the chapter itself - and this at least admits of some improvement.

The chapter opens with a comparison between the soul and the world of nature. Just as in the whole of nature, says Aristotle, there are two distinct things, matter which is potentially all things, and an efficient cause which makes all things, so distinct elements must exist en tê psychê. Our first problem is the meaning of this en te psychê. Does it mean "in the case of soul" or "in each individual soul"? It is perhaps facile of Ross to say that en tê psychê "can hardly mean only 'in the case of the soul'",¹ even if this is in fact correct, without offering some reason for his decision. Rather he might have argued from the text of line 22. Here Aristotle speaks of the Active Intellect when it is separated (chôristheis). The use of the aorist participle (taken with the word chôristos which, as we shall see, must have the sense of "separable" in line 17) implies a time when the Active Intellect is not separate from the Passive. There must therefore be a time when the Active and Passive Intellects are united in some way. That Theophrastus assumed the existence of such a time is shown by his remark Mikton gar pôs ho nous ek te tou poiêtikou kai tou dunamei.² Now if the Active Intellect is at some time at least not separated from the Passive, it is clear that it cannot be wholly transcendent.³

May we say, however, that although the Active Intellect is not entirely transcendent, it is to be regarded as a single Intellect immanent in a number of human souls during their lifetime? Aristotle compares the Active Intellect to art which has an effect on matter (hoion hê technê pros tèn hylên peponthen). Must we assume from this that it is Art (with a capital A) which affects matter? Of course this is not the Aristotelian view. As we know from the Metaphysics (1071A20 - 22), Man is the father

of Man, but there is no such existent as Man. Rather we should say that Peleus is the father of Achilles. Similarly Art is not the efficient cause of the sculpting of a block of marble into the form of a statue. The cause is rather the particular form of the statue in the mind of the sculptor who is the efficient cause of the product. Thus if we are to put any weight at all upon Aristotle's comparison of the Active and Passive Intellects to Art and its material, we must say that it is not Active Intellect, but a particular Active Intellect, that is the element in the soul which "makes all things", just as it is the particular art of the particular sculptor which causes the production of the statue. Aristotle then means by his phrase en tê psychê "inside the individual soul". Every soul therefore contains its own individual Active and Passive Intellect. The interpretations of this passage which spring from the minds of Alexander of Aphrodisias and Averroes must be rejected.⁴

Our interpretation, however, is apparently in accordance with that of Theophrastus (ap. Them. in de Anima 108. 25 - 28 Heinze), who, after wondering whether the Active Intellect is symphytos or whether it has a genesis, decides in favour of the former alternative (eoike d'oun hôs agenêtos). The Active Intellect is agenetos and immanent (enyparchôn). We should note also the language which Theophrastus employs to describe it. It is ho kinôn as well as ho poiêtikos - and the genuinely Aristotelian nature of this terminology has been demonstrated by Barbotin.⁵ The fact that the Active Intellect is a "moving" cause brings it into line with Aristotle's general theories of movement and activity, as we shall see below.

There is no need at this stage of the discussion to invoke the famous text of the De Generatione Animalium about the nous thyrathen, as so many of the commentators have done. This mistake derives from Alexander and still recurs frequently. J. A. Philip,⁶ for example, writes: "The phrase ho thyrathen nous serves as a hint or aid to the understanding of what Aristotle meant by the nous poiêtikos."⁷ Barbotin, however, rightly connects Aristotle's leipetai de ton noun monon thyrathen epeisienai with a passage of Theophrastus quoted by Simplicius. The passage runs hai men orexeis kai epithymiai kai orgai sômatikai kineseis eisi kai apo toutou tèn archên echousin, hosai de

kriseis kai theôriai, tautas ouk estin eis heteron anagagein, all' en autê tê psychê
(this too seems an echo of De Anima 3.5) kai hê archê kai hê energeia kai to telos, ei ge
de kai ho nous kreitton te kai theioteron, hate de exôthen epeision kai panteleios. That
this is an echo of the doctrine of the De Generatione Animalium, if not of the treatise
itself, seems certain, but there is no reason to claim that it refers to the Active
Intellect. Both the De Generatione Animalium and Theophrastus refer to nous as a whole;
to both the distinction between Active and Passive Intellect is irrelevant. There will
therefore be no further discussion here of the nous thyrathen.

We may say then that there are within each individual soul an Active and a
Passive Intellect. The Active Intellect is the moving factor and the Passive the factor
that is moved. We may perhaps compare the doctrine of the Physics that all souls, and
indeed everything in motion, require an efficient as well as a material cause. "If then
everything that is in motion must be moved by something, and that something must either
be moved in its turn by something else or not, and in the latter case it is the true
agent and we need go no further, but in the other case we must run it back until we do
reach a primary mover not moved by something else...then it follows that if everything
that is in motion is moved by some agent, and if the primary agent itself is in motion but
is not moved by anything else, it must be moved by itself (256A14 - 22)." Aristotle then
of course goes on to demonstrate that the first mover is not in fact self-moved but un-
moved, but this does not concern us here. We are simply concerned to recognize that the
individual nous, not being an unmoved mover, must itself be moved in some such way by an
efficient cause. Furthermore, as we know, the efficient cause is present in the nous
itself; it is in fact the Active Intellect.

II

After determining that the Active Intellect is present in the soul, we must next
consider the nature of its activity. Aristotle tells us that it functions "by making all
things". We must therefore unravel the meaning of this phrase. In his book on Aristotle,
Ross held that the function of the Active Intellect is to bring the Passive Intellect up
from potentiality to actuality by making it actually know its objects. So far so good,

but he then supposes that for this to be possible, the Active Intellect must be "something in us that actually knows already, some element that is cut off from our ordinary consciousness so that we are not aware of (its) pre-existing knowledge". This suggestion about the pre-existing knowledge of the Active Intellect will require further investigation later. Ross, however, himself offers a different view in his recent Commentary on the De Anima.⁹ Here he suggests that the Active Intellect is the faculty by which we (1) form general conceptions (2) grasp universal truths, and (3) from two universal truths¹⁰ infer a third. As Philip¹⁰ has pointed out, this view is different from any of the interpretations of the Active Intellect offered by the commentators. Furthermore, as he goes on to show, it does considerable violence to the De Anima itself. Yet Ross himself has indicated (p.45) that there are two suggestions in De Anima 3.5 itself which show how Aristotle must have understood the Active Intellect: the first is the comparison with art which does not make its products out of nothing; the second is that with light which raises potential colours to the status of actual colours. We know in general that Aristotle believes that nothing can be created out of nothing. We can be certain therefore that tôi poiein panta cannot simply mean "by making all things". It must mean "by¹¹ making things of one kind into things of another". That is, the Active Intellect must work upon some "material" and must transform this "material". What is this material? We know that it is in the soul. What else, we may ask, than the Passive Intellect?

Although Ross points to the help the comparisons of the Active Intellect with art and with light can give, he is now unwilling to make use of them. With his account of the function of the Active Intellect in mind, we should not now be surprised at his denying (p.43) that the Active Intellect acts on the Passive Intellect at all; rather, he thinks, it is concerned with the apprehension of a different class of objects. This theory is supported by a curious argument. Aristotle says, according to Ross, "not that the one Reason acts on the other, but that the one makes all things (although on Ross's interpretation it could in fact only make a limited number of "logical" or "mathematical" things) and the other becomes all things. This is certainly what Aristotle says, but the real point is that all things are "made" in the soul. All the objects of thought are

"made" into characteristics of the Passive Intellect which thus "is made" or "becomes" all things. Thus when one thought gives way to the next, the Passive Intellect, now "made" of one kind of thought, is made into another. This is the only way in which it could in fact "become all things". In rejecting such an interpretation, Ross is simply despising what little help Aristotle himself gives us. He is in fact exaggerating his earlier¹² statement that "the analogy with light must not be pressed too closely". Rather it seems that neither this analogy nor the comparison with art should be used at all!

Ross's recent interpretation of the Active Intellect must therefore be denied on the grounds that it flies in the face of what little evidence we have. We must revert to something like the view that he adopted in his Aristotle and recognize, with the De Anima itself, that the Active Intellect has the function of bringing potential knowledge in the Passive Intellect into actuality, just as light turns potential colours into actual colours and art transforms the block of marble into the statue. Active Intellect transforms the nous poiêtikos into a nous noôn. Thus far at least the interpretation of Alexander of Aphrodisias must be pronounced correct.



The Active Intellect, we see, is an efficient cause which acts upon the Passive Intellect in the act of thinking. Since efficient causes are themselves in act, as we read in the Metaphysics (1049B24) as well as in the De Anima itself (417A17 - 18), we must consider the nature of the activity of the Active Intellect. Since the Active Intellect is the efficient cause of thought, are we to suppose that as Peleus, a man in act, is the father of Achilles, so the Active Intellect, if it is to cause thought, must itself have thought?

We should realize from the start that the comparison of the Intellects with Peleus and Achilles must be misleading. Peleus is external to Achilles, but the Active Intellect and the nous noôn are both in the soul. The efficient cause of thought in the soul is not comparable to Peleus, but to that inherited power of development handed on by Peleus to Achilles himself. After Achilles is born, his efficient cause is in himself. We may in a sense say that it is in act, since it is effective, but the immanent efficient cause in Achilles is not in actuality a man. No more need the Active Intellect be

possessed of any knowledge of the external world - for if it were, it would be identical with its objects and thus also pathêtikos - nor need it have any such pre-existing knowledge of which we ourselves are unaware, as Ross suggests. The efficient cause in Achilles is not a man in actuality, but a power that is capable of making Achilles, now a boy, into a man. Similarly there is no need for the Active Intellect to be possessed of actual knowledge, at any rate of the external world; rather it is the power which enables such knowledge to be abstracted by the Passive Intellect.

This rather strange nature of the Active Intellect explains very well the apparent confusion of terminology which Aristotle uses to describe it. It also explains, as we shall see, why the comparison of the Active Intellect with light is so peculiarly apt. In line 15, the Active Intellect is described as hexis tis, while in line 18 it is an energeia. Commentators have found this puzzling. Hicks, after noting that in a number of passages hexis is practically a synonym for eidōs,¹³ writes: "That which is always actual and never potential can only be described as a hexis by a stretch of the term. Hence tis." But the Active Intellect is an unusual kind of energeia in any case. Again it seems comparable to the power to stimulate growth inherent in Achilles. This power might reasonably be called a kind of "positive quality" (the phrase is Hicks') or an actuality. Peleus, of course, could only be described as an actuality, not as a kind of disposition. Hexis is thus also particularly appropriate to an efficient cause in the soul, rather than external to it. Most interesting still is the fact that light itself, to which the Active Intellect is compared, is one of the activities which can at times be called a hexis. At De Anima 3.5.15 it is given as an example of a hexis, yet below it acts as an efficient cause and we would suppose it to be an activity. Indeed elsewhere this is almost always what it is. At De Anima 418B9 and 419A11 it is an energeia tou diaphanous. Yet at 418B19 it is by implication a hexis. The truth of the matter is that Aristotle's terminology of "potentiality", "actuality", "disposition", is sometimes insufficiently precise to achieve an exact description of the phenomena with which he is concerned.

It is well known that Alexander of Aphrodisias' attitude towards this

mysterious hexis is very strange and cannot be acceptable as an interpretation of Aristotle. Alexander's view is that the Active Intellect is the cause of the Passive Intellect's becoming a nous en hexei. It has been suggested that the only reasonable explanation of this is that when he says einai tina dei kai poiêtikon noun, hos aitios
tês hexeôs tês tou hylikou nou ginetai,¹⁴ he is reading a text of Aristotle different from our own, for in De Anima 3.5 as we have it we must certainly follow the general opinion of modern scholars that the Active Intellect is not the cause of some kind of hexis but that it is such a hexis itself. Mr. F. H. Sandbach, however, has suggested to me an explanation which accounts for the difficulty of Alexander's interpretation very well, namely that he understood hôs hexis tis  in line 15. It is certain that Aristotle did not intend this sense, but had he done so I do not believe that it would have been impossible for him to omit the . If Alexander took him this way, we can indeed accuse him of being perverse, but not of being a fool, for if such a reading of Aristotle could be understood, the Alexandrist doctrine would readily follow.

Now that we see what kind of hexis - energeia the Active Intellect is, we should realize that there is no need to suppose that it has some kind of pre-existing knowledge of the external world of whose existence we are unaware. The power of growth in Achilles is not identical with Achilles the man, nor is it any kind of potentiality of Achilles the man; rather it is the power which produces Achilles the man. We might call it poiêtikon. Similarly light is not identical with the colours which it produces, nor is it any kind of "pre-colour" in the ordinary sense of "colour"; rather it is, as we shall see, the colour of the transparent, which must make it different from ordinary colours. Similarly the Active Intellect does not possess ordinary knowledge (and thus is not any thought which is formally identical with the external object of thought) either in a form of which we are conscious or in any other form; rather it is the power which enables the Passive Intellect to become a nous noon¹⁵ by being made identical with the intelligible Forms of the objects of thought.

We can perhaps understand this power a little better by pushing the comparison with light (as light is understood by Aristotle) a little further. Light is not one of

the colours it brings up from potentiality to actuality, but it is in a sense analogous to them. It is a colour sui generis; to phôs hoion chrôma esti tou diaphanous (De Anima 418B11). Similarly perhaps the Active Intellect will not have knowledge, pre-existing or otherwise, of the same kind as that which it helps to produce in the Passive Intellect, but another knowledge of a unique kind, which could therefore only be knowledge of itself, since all other knowledge could potentially be obtainable by the Passive Intellect. But we shall return to this later.

III

In line 17 Aristotle describes the Active Intellect as chôrîstos kai apathês kai amigês; in line 22 he speaks of a time when it is chôrîstheis. Following Zeller, Hicks remarks that "chôrîstos means here not merely 'separable' but 'actually separate' i.e. 'not involved in physical life'." He thinks it is best explained by De Generatione Animalium 736B28 where bodily activities are said to have nothing to do with the activity of nous (cf. De An. 408B29, 413A4 - 8), and remarks that "the three predicates chôrîstos, apathês, amigês were applied to nous in III c. 4 before any mention had been made of the distinction between active and passive intellect". He believes that in chapter four these epithets are applied primarily to the Passive Intellect and that they must now be applied a fortiori to the Active. And, he holds, in chapter four chôrîstos means "actually separate".

Let us first look at whether we can derive much help for chapter five from chapter four. In chapter four there is no doubt that Aristotle is teaching that nous must be wholly free from association with the body. That is the sense he gives to amigês (e.g. 429A18, 24 - 25). Chôrîstos too then must, as Hicks says, mean "actually separate" at 429A11, separate, that is, from the body-soul complex. But what relevance has this for our chôrîstos in chapter five line seventeen? Is Aristotle there speaking of the relation of nous in general or even of the Passive Intellect to the body?

As a preliminary to the solution of this problem, we must compare chôrîstos with the chôrîstheis of line 22. Most recent writers on this chapter of the De Anima have assumed that the words chôrîstheis d'esti monon touth' hoper esti (ll. 22 - 23)

refer to the Active Intellect and that it is this Intellect alone which Aristotle pro-
claims to be immortal. Not so Professor Mansion.¹⁶ Criticizing Soleri, Mansion denies
that Aristotle holds the Active Intellect to be divine. In fact, according to Mansion,
as far as immortality is concerned "il ne s'agit plus de l'intellect agent ou actif, mais
uniquement, d'après ce qu' on vient de rappeler, de la pure essence de l'intellect...
l'intellect actif est périssable de la même façon et pour la même raison" as the passive.
Mansion's notion of the "pure essence of Intellect" as something quite unconnected with
the Active or Passive Intellect is a strange one which seems to derive from his pushing
the idea that these two Intellects are really only aspects of the Intellect as a whole
too far. Yet how can chôristheis not refer to the Active Intellect? Mansion's inter-
pretation involves the supposition that chôristheis cannot refer to the same thing as is
referred to by chôristos in line 17, for chôristos, whatever it means, must refer to the
Active Intellect. This is certainly a most unnatural interpretation of the Greek.
Furthermore, Mansion's use of the phrase "pure essence of Intellect" might lead one to
suppose that Aristotle refers to the idea of essence specifically. Had Aristotle wished
to refer to the essence of Intellect, he had phrases for essence ready to hand which
would have indicated his meaning clearly. In fact, the change from the masculine
chôristheis to the neuter touth' hoper esti merely shows, as we shall see, that after
death the Active Intellect no longer acts on the Passive, but just remains what it is.¹⁷
Since therefore Aristotle does not talk about an essence of Intellect here (or anywhere
else) and since what Mansion takes to refer to such an essence is easier understood as
referring to the Active Intellect after its separation from the Passive Intellect and the
body at death, Mansion's suggestion must be rejected.

Now that we are assured that chôristheis in line 22 refers to the Active
Intellect, we may revert to the exact meaning of chôristos in line 17. In chapter five
Aristotle is in fact not only thinking of the relation of the Active Intellect to the
body, but to the Passive Intellect as well. This is the clear implication of the
sentence beginning aei gar timiôteron. Aristotle is reverting again to his position at
the beginning of the chapter that there is an Active and a Passive element in the soul.

The Active (to poioun) is superior. Thus the words "for the active is always superior to the passive" explain the description of the Active Intellect as chôristos, apathês, amigês. In chapter four, as we have seen, the Intellect as a whole, including presumably the Passive Intellect, is held to be unmixed with the body and apathês (429A15), but nevertheless the Passive Intellect, as its very name poiêtikos shows, is receptive of the Forms of the objects (including the material objects) of its thought (429A15 - 16). In chapter five, as we have seen, the words chôristos and apathês are explained by a reference to the superiority of the Active Intellect to the Passive. The Passive Intellect in a sense is not apathês, that is, it is pathêtikos of the Forms abstracted in thought, while the Active is not even affected in that peculiar fashion. Since then the Passive Intellect is not in every respect chôristos and apathês, while the Active is, then Aristotle must in fact be distinguishing between them. The Active Intellect must be chôristos from what is not entirely chôristos. The Passive Intellect in fact is analogous to matter (1.19) while the Active is an efficient cause. Efficient causes are often separate or separable from the matter on which they operate. Thus when Aristotle says that the Active Intellect is chôristos and apathês we must conclude that these words refer not only to separation from the body, as in chapter four, but to the separation of the Active Intellect from the Passive Intellect also. The word chôristos then must mean here that the Active Intellect is either "separable" or "actually separate" from the Passive.

Yet in relation to the Passive Intellect it transpires that the Active Intellect cannot always be separate. If the Active Intellect were always separate, the use of the aorist participle chôristheis¹⁸ would be absurd. As Ross¹⁹ indicates, the words chôristheis...hoper esti must almost certainly mean "that after separation from the Passive Reason, at death, the Active Reason is just its true self". It is, as Hicks²⁰ says, now to be considered in its true self alone, and no longer as also acting on the Passive Intellect. But even if Aristotle means that only after separation is it its true self - which is unlikely since even when associated with the Passive Intellect it must be apathês, amigês and tei ousiai on energeia - then the following argument is still valid.

For Aristotle to be able to say "having been separated" implies that he supposes there is a time when the Active Intellect is not "separated". That he thinks of the separation as taking place at death is shown by the immediate raising of the question of immortality. Since then there is a time when the Active Intellect is not separated but linked in some way to the Passive, as efficient cause to matter, and since, however, separation does occur at death, then during a man's lifetime his Active Intellect must not be separated but separable.

IV

In his edition of the De Anima Ross brackets out to d'auto (1.19)...ou noei (1.22); in his German translation Theiler omits to d'auto...oude chronoi. Ross suggests that since these words (as far as oude chronoi) recur in chapter seven - where, as Mr. Sandbach reminded me, they are also preceded by hyles - and are more appropriate there, they should be excised here. He adds that they disturb the continuity of lines 17 - 19 with 22 - 25. The latter argument is subjective and could not be accepted as adequate by itself. As we shall see, the words all' ouk hote men noei hote d'ou noei deleted by Ross but retained by Theiler are necessary for an understanding of the last phrase of the chapter. And even if this were not so, it would seem that Theiler is the more moderate in retaining these words which do not occur again in chapter seven, while still deleting the passage from to d'auto to oude chronoi. Assuming therefore that there is no satisfactory reason for deleting as much as Ross desires, let us consider the validity of the decision to remove simply the passage that is repeated in chapter seven.

There would seem to be a clear case for deletion only if these words upset the sense of chapter five. Let us consider the idea that in the individual potential knowledge is prior to actual knowledge, though in general this is not so. How does this idea square with the following suggestion that the Active Intellect always noei? Now we know already that the Active Intellect is in the soul of the individual and is distinct in each individual. We know too that it is in act and that it is a hexis tis, like light. Since this is so, the potential knowledge that is prior in the individual cannot be the

knowledge of the Active Intellect. Nor, since the Active Intellect thinks (noei) continuously and not intermittently, can it have any potential knowledge of any kind. We must therefore assume that the words from to d'auto to oude chronoi cannot refer to the Active Intellect. It seems most unlikely that Aristotle would use the word epistēmē of the Active Intellect in any case; noēsis would be more appropriate. Ross and Theiler have therefore a certain justification for excluding to d'auto..oude chronoi from chapter five as irrelevant to the Active Intellect. Yet it will appear later that these words may serve a purpose in Aristotle's exposition - the purpose of showing what the Active Intellect is not.

V

Aristotle is quite specific that the Active Intellect alone is immortal. He then says that "we do not remember" because the Active Intellect, which is immortal, is impassive while the Passive Intellect is perishable. ²³ Part of the sense of this is that because the Passive Intellect perishes, the power of memory must perish with it. ²⁴ That is, he is saying that because of the perishing of the Passive Intellect, "we do not remember" after death. This is not quite the same position as he has adopted at 408B23 where he says that it is because of the perishing of the body that memory ceases. But ²⁵ the difference between the two is not as great as Hicks implies. Both share the view that the part of the complex individual man which survives death has no power of memory. Hicks mentions the further objection that ou mnemoneuomen cannot mean "we do not remember after death" because "we cannot know now that we do not remember after death, but the words of the text presuppose a known fact". Yet the truth is that ou mnemoneuomen is not presented as a fact but as a deduction from the facts that the Active Intellect is impassive while the Passive Intellect is perishable. We do not remember after death ²⁶ because "we" do not survive; our Active Intellects, which do survive, are impassive and thus obviously have no memory.

It appears that the only knowledge which could conceivably be present in an Intellect devoid both of memory and of the power to abstract from sense-data must be

knowledge of itself, if it is continually conscious of itself and intuitis itself in an eternal present without memory of the past or imagination of the future. Thus the Active Intellect which thinks continually and cannot know the external world must be thinking (if we can call it "thinking" - perhaps "being conscious" would be a better phrase) of itself. In this respect it is comparable with God who is no[^]esis no[^]ese[^]os in the Metaphysics (1074B33).²⁷ Scarcely anyone nowadays is disposed to take seriously the identification of the Active Intellect with God made by Alexander of Aphrodisias, but we can at least learn to see how such an identification might have seemed plausible. We have demonstrated here certain features of the Active Intellect akin to those of God, but although to move from similarity to identity would be rash, yet at least a recognition that the highest aspect of the human mind can have no knowledge of the external world may help us to understand why the God of the Metaphysics a fortiori cannot have such knowledge. This God is said to be very good (1072B30) and to think what is best (1074B33). Clearly the best must be more akin to the Active than to the Passive Intellect of man, and clearly the thought of God must be more akin to the thought of that Active Intellect. Thus if the Active Intellect has no memory and no knowledge of the external world, we should not be surprised that Aristotle refuses to attribute such memory and knowledge to God. Perhaps we may say that Aristotle envisages both God and the Active Intellect as the power of thought understood as thought of itself.

VI

Yet in this discussion of the nature of the Active Intellect by itself is not a fundamental difficulty being neglected? We have seen already that the Active Intellect is during our lifetime "in the soul" and that it acts as a necessary efficient cause of thought. Yet since the soul is a unity and exists as a unity, how can Aristotle hold that some part of it (i.e. the Active Intellect) can exist separately after death? The human soul for Aristotle is the form of the human body; form and matter cannot exist apart except in the minds of philosophers, that is, as abstractions. If soul by itself is an abstraction, how can a mere part of that soul, the Active Intellect, be anything

more than an abstraction? Yet clearly for Aristotle it is much more than an abstraction.²⁸ There is no easy solution to this problem. All we can do here is indicate that this difficulty about the Active Intellect is merely an extreme example of a difficulty about the Aristotelian form in general. The problem has been explained in the clearest possible terms by Gilson.²⁹ Gilson imagines Plato living long enough to read the first book of Aristotle's Metaphysics and then writing a dialogue entitled Aristoteles to refute the novelties of his pupil. In this supposed dialogue Socrates is made to say; "Then, my lad, I wish you could tell me how it may be that beings are, through sharing in an essence, which itself is not." The difficulty is simply that while Aristotle usually regards synola (individuals) as the only realities, he also identifies ousia with essence in the Metaphysics. Essence is the cause of the existence of individuals, but essence by itself does not exist. And yet sometimes it does seem to exist apart - at least in the case of God. But not only in the case of God does this difficulty arise. We can now see that the Active Intellects, identical but distinct in individual men, exhibit the same confusion. The soul is the form of the body; the Active Intellect is in the soul during our mortal life; the form cannot exist without the matter.

If any real consistency is to be preserved for the doctrine of the De Anima, we cannot but follow the advice of Philip,³⁰ who remarks: "I can see no grounds for refusing to concede that in studying and describing the human soul Aristotle recognized in it some faculty or capacity or element not explainable as part of the body-soul complex..." It is certainly true that in De Anima 3.5 the Active Intellect does not seem to be explainable as part of such a complex; yet we must not forget that in general Aristotle holds that it is by the possession of the power of reason that man is differentiated from the animals. And he is not merely thinking of the possession of such a power, but of its use; that is, he regards nous noon as an essential aspect of the form of man.³¹ We are back again to the problem of whether and in what way form in general can exist apart. The De Anima merely exhibits in an extreme manner the difficulties in the whole Aristotelian doctrine of the reality or unreality of essence. The soul is not only a form, but, as we know from 412B 10 - 11, an ousia hē kata ton logon. touto de to ti ēn einai toi toîōidi

sômati. In view of this, it seems no easier to understand how the human mind, and a fortiori the Active Intellect, is not a part of the body-soul complex than it is to believe that there can be wholly immaterial substances. And yet for Aristotle there is at least one such substance.

VII

We must turn to the last phrase of the chapter, where the text reads kai aneu toutou outhen noeî.³² Of this Ross wrote as follows: "The last words of the chapter are capable of a variety of interpretations, viz.

- (1) 'and without the passive reason the active reason knows nothing.'
- (2) 'and without the active reason the passive reason knows nothing.'
- (3) 'and without the passive reason nothing knows.'
- (4) 'and without the active reason nothing knows.'

Without offering any reason for his choice, Ross then approved of number (4).

It is clear that the problem in this sentence is the reference of toutou. Considerations of grammar do not seem adequate to settle the matter one way or the other; considerations of doctrine must therefore be invoked. Now we should naturally suppose that if nothing "thinks" without the Passive Intellect, then the Active Intellect cannot think when it is separated from that Passive Intellect. And yet unless we unreasonably excise the phrase ouk hote men noeî hote d'ou noeî in line 22, we know that the Active Intellect does not merely think intermittently. Hence it would seem absurd to suppose that aneu toutou means "without the Passive Intellect".³³ Zeller, however, who is followed on this point by Rodier,³⁴ and whose argument in itself is accepted as reasonable³⁵ by Hicks, denies the contradiction. His argument is that the phrase ouk hote men noeî hote d'ou noeî does not apply to the thought of the individual, whereas it is such thought that is under discussion in aneu toutou outhen noeî. Zeller's contention that the earlier passage does not deal with individuals depends on a comparison of these words with the section to d'auto...oude chronôî[^] immediately preceding them. Of course if this section is to be deleted (as is the view of Ross and Theiler) half our difficulties are

solved, but the case for deletion is, as we have seen, insufficiently strong for us to neglect Zeller's argument. Assuming then that we accept the full text, are we to agree that Zeller's suggestion is valid? Are we to say that since in general actual epistēmē is prior to potential, but that this is not so in the individual, the words all' ouk hote... noei, with their suggestion that the Active Intellect must qua active be in continuous thought, cannot apply to the Active Intellect in any individual soul, but must refer to the Active Intellect in general?

We are in no way bound to accept such reasoning. In the first place we must consider the Active Intellects within each individual soul. They cannot, as we have seen, be merely potential. What in that case would bring them up to actuality? Another Active Intellect? Such a regress is impossible. The Passive Intellect? That is absurd. They are in fact already tēlousiāōn energeia. It should thus be clear that the words to d'auto... oude chronōi are not to be taken in the manner favoured by Zeller. We cannot deduce from them that the Active Intellect in the individual has potential epistēmē before it has actual. Such a situation turns out to be absurd. Besides, the very use of the term epistēmē should indicate that the words to d'auto... oude chronōi do not concern the Active Intellect at all, and should not therefore be used as a guide to all' ouk... noei. Episteme, as we know well from the sixth book of the Nicomachean Ethics and elsewhere is not the same as nous. The truth of the matter may be - and this is perhaps the best reason for retaining the words to d'auto... oude chronōi - that while in the individual potential epistēmē is prior in time to actual, the Active Intellect on the contrary does not experience the movement from potential to actual noēsis but rather is continually in act. Thus Aristotle by the whole passage to d'auto... ou noei is further emphasizing the uniqueness of the operation of the Active Intellect. This being so, Zeller's attempt to persuade us that aneu toutou can refer to the Passive Intellect without Aristotle's contradicting what he has just said must be accounted a failure. We are bound therefore to translate aneu toutou as "without the Active Intellect".

Thus of Ross's four alternatives as translations for the last phrase of De Anima 3.5 we can eliminate two. The words must either mean "and without the Active Intellect

the Passive Intellect thinks nothing", or "and without the Active Intellect nothing thinks". It is not of great importance for our understanding of Aristotle's general doctrine to fix on one of these versions as correct, but common-sense certainly points in one direction. If we ask ourselves what might for Aristotle be capable of thought of some kind, we must surely answer Either the Active Intellect or the Passive Intellect and nothing else. If then nothing else thinks, it would be pretentious for Aristotle to write "And without the Active Intellect nothing thinks", since apart from the Passive Intellect, nothing else could be expected to think. Therefore it seems highly likely that the whole phrase means "and without the Active Intellect, the Passive Intellect thinks nothing". A second, though less likely possibility is revived by Hicks.³⁶ This is that noei, like mnemoneuei in 408B28, is "quasi-impersonal". This seems a less natural way of taking the Greek, but at least Hicks agrees that outhen cannot be the subject of noei.

There is one final point which may be touched on briefly here, and that is the difference between sensation and thought, for my general interpretation may seem to have blurred it somewhat. If thought is analogous to sensation, says Aristotle at 429A13 - 14, it must be acted upon by its object (paschein hypo tou noêtou). We know in the case of sensation that the objects sensed are themselves the agents which stimulate the sense-organ. They are themselves poiêtika of its activity (417B20, cf. De Sensu 445B7). Now there is no doubt that the Passive Intellect too needs to be brought up to activity by something that is active (cf. 417A17 - 18). The question is: how far in this respect is thought analogous to sensation? There is in fact a great difference. Whereas in the case of sensation it is the objects sensed which act upon the sense-organ, and thus the organ is affected by something external (417B20), in the case of thought, that is the grasp of universals (Anal. Post. 87B37), the stimulation is provided not by the objects of thought (which are nowhere called poiêtika) but by the Active Intellect. This is why the process of thought does not depend on the possession of "organs" (cf. 429A26 - 27).

In sum then we may say that in the individual soul there is an Active and a Passive Intellect. The effect of the former is to bring the latter up from potency to

act. It is itself in a rather peculiar kind of act. As for immortality, this is limited to the Active Intellect, which certainly survives, though it has no memory and no knowledge of the external world. Its strange character may perhaps best be summarized as a power to induce thought which is itself some kind of self-thinking being. If this much is clear about the nature and function of the Active Intellect,³⁷ the nature and function of the Passive Intellect becomes easier to understand.

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Footnotes

1. W. D. Ross, Aristotle⁵ (London 1949) 149, note 1.
2. Alexander substitutes epi tou nou for en te psyche at De An. 88.17 Bruns.
3. Ap. Themistium, in de an. 108.24 - 25 Heinze. For the significance of mikton see E. Barbotin, La Théorie Aristotélécienne de l'Intellect d'après Théophraste (Louvain 1954) 163 - 165.
4. Cf. G. Soleri, L'Immortalità dell' Anima in Aristotele (Turin 1952) 130 - 131 and the neo-Averroistic interpretation of F. Nuyens, L'Evolution de la Psychologie d'Aristote (Louvain 1948) 299 - 303.
5. E. Barbotin (see note 3) 94, 155 - 156.
6. In a review of Ross's edition of the De Anima published in Phoenix 16 (1962) 201, note 1.
7. E. Barbotin (see note 3) 214.
8. W. D. Ross (see note 1) 149 - 150.
9. W. D. Ross, Commentary on De Anima (Oxford 1961) 45 - 47.
10. J. Philip, (see note 6) 199.
11. Cf. R. D. Hicks' edition of the De Anima (Cambridge 1907) 499, on A 12.
12. W. D. Ross (see note 1) 150.
13. R. D. Hicks (see note 11) 501, on A 15.
14. De An. 88.23 Bruns. Cf. De Anima Mantissa 107.40 - 41, ho poiêtikos, di' hon ho hylikos en hexei ginetai...analogon òn houtos ho poiêtikos, hôs phêsin ho Aristotelês, toî phôti.
15. R. D. Hicks (see note 11) 5D2, on A 17.
16. A. Mansion, "L'Immortalité de l'Ame et de l'Intellect d'après Aristote", Rev. Phil. de Louvain 51 (1953) 468.
17. Cf. R. D. Hicks (see note 11) 506, on A 22, who compares Rep. 611A - 612A. The remark of Barbotin (see note 3) 166, note 2, that the Active Intellect "retrouve à la mort la simplicité de son essence" is misleading. The Active Intellect is always simple. During life however it not only exists in itself but also affects

the Passive Intellect.

18. If Aristotle required a word which would not naturally have a temporal sense, he could have said kechôrismenos (cf. 431B18).

Despite his continual translation of chôristos as "separate", Soleri (see note 4) 132 seems to have some idea of the distinction between chôristos and chôristheis when he writes: "O si deve intendere il chôristos in psicologia, come indipendenza di diritto e possibilità di separazione (e con separazione di fatto nell' esperienza vissuta) del nous".

19. W. D. Ross (see note 9) 48.
20. R. D. Hicks (see note 11) 506, on A 22.
21. W. Theiler, Aristoteles, Uber die Seele (Berlin 1959) 59.
22. For a rejection of the view that all' ouk hote... noi refers not to each particular Active Intellect, but to the Active Intellect in general, see below.
23. R. D. Hicks (see note 11) 508, on A 24 explains why Aristotle, who does not argue the fact here, holds that the Passive Intellect is perishable. The Passive Intellect has some potentiality (of substance) in it, and nothing of this kind can endure (Met. 1050B6 - 18).
24. The punctuation ou mnemoneuomen de hoti (giving the sense "We do not in life remember that the Active Intellect is eternal") is impossible since we could not "remember" in life a fact which we never knew. The pre-existing Active Intellect, since it is impassive, obviously could not be receptive of facts.
25. R. D. Hicks (see note 11) 507, on A 23.
26. Why does Aristotle write mnemoneuomen rather than mnemoneuei as in 408B27? Because at 408B27 ff. he has already remarked that memory is an affection of that which "holds" the mind rather than the mind itself, and therefore it is clear that at the death of the body memory ceases. At 430A23 - 24 however he has not specifically said that memory is an activity of the complex, and therefore by writing we do not remember, he emphasizes that when the Passive Intellect perishes (and the "we" is

thus destroyed), then memory perishes with us.

I am tempted to suppose that the words "We do not remember", followed by "this (the Active Intellect) is impassive" contributed to Alexander's positing a common Active Intellect for all of us.

27. A similar comparison is made by Mansion (see note 16) 470, who however compares not the Active Intellect but the "pure essence of Intellect".
28. Although in this paper we are discussing the problem of the Active Intellect only, it should be observed that nous as a whole is held by Aristotle in a number of passages (apart from De. An. 3.4 where it is choristos[^]) to be some sort of entity in its own right. It "seems" to be an ousia in its own right and to be imperishable at De An. 408B19 - 20. At 413A6 - 7 there are some parts of the soul which are not entelechies of the body. Nous comes from outside at De Gen Anim. 736B27 ff. and 744B21 ff. The possibility of its survival occurs again at Met. 1070A24. It goes without saying that all this is difficult to square with the perishability of the Passive Intellect in De Anima 3.5.
29. E. Gilson, Being and Some Philosophers (Toronto 1952) 49 - 50.
30. J. Philip (see note 6) 201.
31. Cf. A. Mansion (see note 16) 466.
32. W. D. Ross (see note 1) 152.
33. E. Zeller, Aristotle II (Eng trans., London 1897) 101, note 3.
34. G. Rodier, Traité de l'Ame II (Paris 1900) 467.
35. R. D. Hicks (see note 11) 509.
36. R. D. Hicks (see note 11) 510.
37. I should like to thank those persons who read an earlier draft of this paper, and in particular Mr. F. H. Sandbach, without whose comments it would never have realized its present form.